

1. Observing the Mind and the Body

First I would like to thank Mrs. Trang for asking me this question. It is very important that yogis observe mind and body separately, because only that way they may distinguish them. The understanding of mind and body separately is essential for understanding their cooperation. How much important that is is explained in *Visuddhimagga's "Sammādiṭṭhi Niddesa"*, "The Exposition on Right View". The very first insight knowledge (*vipassanā ñāṇa*) is the understanding of difference between body and mind.

There are masters in the world, who teach that by observing mind one can observe the body too. This however is nowhere substantiated by the Pāḷi scriptures, and the students of such masters often blunder for years and years before they get to the very first stage (insight knowledge) of *vipassanā*. Mind and body are observed in different ways, and they should not be mixed. At least if you follow the Buddha's teachings in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of *Dīgha Nikāya 22* and *Majjhima Nikāya 10*:

kāye kāyānupassī viharati = (the yogi) dwells in *body* (when) observing the *body*

vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati = (the yogi) dwells in *feelings* (when) observing the *feelings*

citte cittānupassī viharati = (the yogi) dwells in *mind* (when) observing the *mind*

dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati = (the yogi) dwells in (*mental*) *phenomena* (when) observing the (*mental*) *phenomena*

The clear awareness of "which of the four Foundations of Mindfulness am I now observing?" is one of the four Clear Comprehensions (*sampajañña*). To practice *vipassanā* correctly, both *sati* and *sampajañña* have to be present – all of the 22 practices of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* end with the instruction "*ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam*", which means "zealous, clearly comprehending, mindful, (the yogi) should avoid the appreciation (and) resentment (for anything) in the world." Clear comprehension consists of four facets:

sāttthaka-sampajañña – clear comprehension of the purpose (with which one does an action by body, speech, or mind)

sappāya-sampajañña – clear comprehension of the suitability (with which one does an action by body, speech, or mind)

gocara-sampajañña – clear comprehension of the Foundation of Mindfulness (with which one does an action by body, speech, or mind)

asammoha-sampajañña – clear comprehension of the presence of mindfulness (/ "absence of delusion")

In the Pāli Commentary (*Aṭṭhakathā*) to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of *Dīgha Nikāya*, there is an interesting mention of the ancient Kuru people and their meditation practice. These people lived in the time of the Buddha. :

Original Pāli Commentary ¹	English Translation by monk Saraṇa
<i>Apica tasmim̐ janapade catasso parisā pakatiyāva satipaṭṭhānabhāvanānuyogamanuyuttā viharanti,</i>	In fact, in that country (known as "Kuru"), (all) the four assemblies (of lay men, lay women, monks, and nuns) dwelled naturally engaging in the practice of meditating on Establishing Mindfulness (<i>/ Satipaṭṭhāna</i>).
<i>antamaso dāsakammakaraparijānāpi satipaṭṭhānapaṭisaṃyuttameva katham̐ kathenti.</i>	Moreover, they gave explanation (<i>/</i> "talked the talk") related to Establishment of Mindfulness even to (their) servants, workers, (and) followers.
<i>Udakatitthasuttakantanatṭhānādīsupi niratthakakathā nāma nappavattati.</i>	Useless talk did not occur even in the places such as a bank of a river (<i>/</i> "water") (or place of) spinning threads (for weaving).
<i>Sace kāci itthī "amma, tvaṃ kataram̐ satipaṭṭhānabhāvanam̐ manasikarosi"ti pucchitā "na kiñci"ti vadati,</i>	If a certain woman was asked "lady, which Foundation of Mindfulness do you observe?" says "none",
<i>taṃ garahanti "dhiratthu tava jīvitam̐, jīvamānāpi tvaṃ matasadisā"ti.</i>	(people) scold her: "your life is wasted (<i>/</i> useless), even though (you) are alive, you are like dead."
<i>Atha naṃ "mā dāni puna evamakāsi"ti ovaditvā aññataram̐ satipaṭṭhānam̐ uggaṇhāpentī.</i>	Then (the people) admonish her: "don't do this any more!" and teach (her) one (<i>/ aññataram̐</i>) of the Foundations of Mindfulness.
<i>Yā pana "aham̐ asukasatipaṭṭhānam̐ nāma manasikaromi"ti vadati,</i>	Who, however, says: "I observe <i>that particular</i> ² Foundation of Mindfulness",
<i>tassā "sādhū sādhū"ti sādhukāram̐ katvā</i>	Her (people) will compliment: "very well, very well,"
<i>"tava jīvitam̐ sujīvitam̐, tvaṃ nāma manussattam̐ pattā, tavatthāya sammāsambuddho uppanno"tiādīhi pasamsanti.</i>	And praise her (saying things) such as: "Your life is a good life. You, indeed, have become a human being, (and) the Rightly and Self (Enlightened) Buddha appeared (in the world) for you."

If one meditates without clear awareness of "what Foundation of Mindfulness am I now practicing? Body, feelings, mental states, or (mental) phenomena?" their Clear Comprehension is insufficient, and their progress may be unnecessarily delayed. It is therefore necessary to be clearly aware of what Foundation of Mindfulness one is practicing. I would suggest that one makes a clear determination either in the beginning of the day (e.g. in the morning, saying "today I will observe the body", and another day "today I will observe the mind"), or in the beginning of each meditation session (sitting/walking/standing/lying down) (e.g. at the start of sitting meditation, saying "from now on I will observe the body for 60 minutes", and another session "from now on I will observe the mind for 60 minutes").

¹ *Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā – 2. Mahāvagga – 9(22). Mahāsatiṭṭhānasuttavaṇṇanā*, MM vol.2, p.334. Translated with help of ven. Janakābhivamsa's Burmese "*Mahāvagga Bhāsāṭīkā*" vol.3, p.523.

² This is to say "any of the four Foundations of Mindfulness in particular."

Below I have composed a number of suggestions for observing different situations in daily life as body, and as mind. Mind-observation is described in general, not according to the Foundations of Mindfulness.³

looking (the intentional act of accepting light)

MIND: observe the intention to see, the intention to know, the intention to enjoy that sight, the feelings that arise based on that sight, the perception that arises immediately when you see something

BODY: observe the nature of the eyes (i.e. just four elements - hardness, fluidity, movement, temperature), the "dead" nature of the eyes (eyes don't know that they are looking), and the brain (just four elements, has the consistency similar to pudding/butter), the "dead" nature of the brain (brain doesn't know it is in skull), etc.

seeing (the unintentional act of accepting light)

MIND: observe the perceptions and feelings that arise in the mind in dependence on the perceived objects; see the intention to stay on the object or the intention to look elsewhere. Also remind yourself that what is seen ends up in the brain, and there is flashes and disappears to give space to the following moment of seeing. Whatever moment of seeing arises, that is entirely destroyed and replaced by the other moment of seeing. The previous moment of seeing can never be obtained back.

BODY: be aware of the anatomy of the eye as physically structured, the fact that the front part of the eye receives the light, whereas most of the eye ("vitreous body") is not involved in the process of reception of the light. Remember that the "eye" is not aware of the idea "I see", or even that it is in the eye-socket. The brain doesn't know that "seeing" is processed in it, just like it doesn't know it is in the skull.

hearing (the unintentional act of accepting sound-waves)

MIND: the outer side of your ear where the ear meets with sound, observing the changing nature of the sound; also notice the feelings and perceptions that arise in your mind based on the sound waves that entered your ear.

BODY: the shape of the ear, the skin, and the inner parts of the ear, i.e. the tympanic and labyrinth portions.

smelling

MIND: the inner side of your nose where the nose-nerves meet with smell, observing the changing nature of the smell. Observe also the feelings and perceptions that arise from what you smell.

BODY: the shape of the nose, the hair in the nose, the tiny pores in the skull through which the smell receptors receive the smell.

³ I was told that yogis (especially non-Asian) might not appreciate pages and pages of lists and enumerations of different possibilities. It is possible to learn the different lists and possibilities from *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* or from a meditation teacher who knows them. It will be my pleasure to explain each list one after another to an advanced yogi, who has successfully passed the *mettā* and *asubha* phases of my retreat program.

talking

MIND: the intention to speak, the intention to move mouth, the intention to make a sound (by mouth), the intention to share the information, the thoughts as they arise-change-disappear in the mind, your reaction to what you say, the change of the thoughts, the follow-up after thoughts; also observe the perception of the different phenomena in the mind, often arising as pure conjectures (i.e. not absolutely real, just assumptions).

BODY: the movement of the mouth - tongue, lips, chin, teeth; observe the movement of the head, hands, and see how the different parts (i.e. bones) are carried by the muscles (in the head, hand, etc.).

eating

MIND: intention to take the food, intention to enjoy the food, intention to put the food in the mouth, intention to taste the food, intention to bite the food, intention to swallow the food; the feelings during that process (pleasant/unpleasant/neutral), the perception of the food as food.

BODY: the workings of the tongue, teeth, and lips, the nature of the mouth - it is just meat and bones/teeth, observe the chewing muscles (at the end of the lower jaw).

cooking

MIND: the intention to take the spoon, pot, or any other cooking utensils, the feeling of them, the perceptions of them, the intention to cook, the perception of the final product, the expectations from cooking, the intention to go get the salt etc., the fear of cutting fingers or crying during slicing onion, the worry that the food might not be tasty, the attitude to the fact that you are supposed to cook (now), the changing thoughts that arise and pass during cooking, notice if you forget to bring with you something to the pot/pan/etc., notice the attitude that may arise if the food is really tasty, the appreciation. Notice whether the mind as more "craving" for the food, or more "generosity" attitude if there is also other person who will eat the food.

BODY: Notice how the body changes postures (walking, standing, sitting), how your hands flex and straighten, how your legs flex and straighten, how your neck is turning, how the muscles of your body carry the bones and other parts of your body - whereas the bones and the other parts are just carried by the muscles.

driving

MIND: observe the intention to drive, the intention to arrive to a certain place, the perception of that place, looking forward to come there, the stress that arises based on the greed and expectation to arrive there at a certain time in a certain form (i.e. elegant and peaceful), the perception of cars, the dissatisfaction if a car comes in front of you, if a car drives too slowly or too quickly, or the worry of the possible danger, the excitement/shock/wonder if you witness a car-crash (or the aftermath), the happiness/joy if you are driving on time and can go peacefully not too much in a hurry, Observe the feelings of hands on the steering-wheel, the feelings of feet on the pedals, the resentment if there is too strong sun or rain, the comfort if you have air-conditioner/heater in the car and feeling it from the chair on-board computer. You can also observe the fleeting nature of the perception - now car, now no car, now highway, now small road, etc. - different circumstances arise, change, and disappear while driving - and after they appear-change-disappear, you can never take them back. See the worry of bumping into a car in front/at the back, and

see how that circumstance is also fleeting - you get out of that situation and immediately let go of it, it is gone and will never come back. Observe all different circumstances during driving as they come and go one after another.

BODY: observe the change of muscles in the feet, hands, and head as you are driving.

lying down for rest

MIND: the intention to lie down, to sleep; the perception of your body lying down, the pleasant feeling that you can lie down, the perception of rest.

BODY: the change of the bodily posture, the different muscles that are carrying the skeleton and other parts of the body, the skeleton and other parts of the body as they are carried by the muscles.

I believe that from this rich list of examples you can realize yourself what are the things to observe when you observe body, and when you observe mind. Remember not to mix mind and body - mind should be understood separately from the body, and body should also be understood separately from the mind. Only that way you can come to the level where you can understand their mutual interaction and the characteristics of it (impermanent, unsatisfactory, not-self). Always remember, that both mind and body are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self, hence they are not worth craving for, clinging, or any expectations.

2. Deciphering the Burmese Codes

Burmese proverbs, sayings, and mnemotechnic devices are oftentimes formed according to a specific rule of codes. If you know the "key" to the code, then you can decipher it (up to some extent). Many Burmese sayings and mnemotechnic devices however might not be deciphered without the explanation, and thus a lot of wonderful knowledge is gone together with their pioneers or carriers.

One such code is about virtue, coded into a eulogy of Mandalay Hill:

"အသက်ကလေးရယ်တဲ့ ရှယ်စေလို မန်းတောင်ရိပ်ခို" -
"Athet/ Kalay/ Yay/tet Shay/se/lo, Man/daung/ Yeik/ Kho/."

This can be translated as "Because (one) wants to make long (their) 'oh little life', (he/she) takes refuge in the Mandalay hill."

This of course makes no deeper sense without explanation. The interesting thing is, that there is no deeper explanation to the long life at Mandalay Hill. However, if we explain the second (underlined) part by the verbatim (syllable by syllable) deciphering system, we will learn how to attain a long life:

a, i, u, o = 1
ka, kha, ga, gha, ña = 2
sa, sha, za, zha, ña = 3
ya, ra, la, va, ña = 4

pa, pha, ba, bha, ma = 5
sa, ha = 6
ta, tha, da, dha, ña, ta, tha, da, dha, na = 7

Man = 5 (five precepts – no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no telling lies, no consumption of intoxicants)

taung = 7 (seven characteristics of a good person – 1. faith (in Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, *kamma* and its result), 2. shame of doing evil, 3. dread of bad action, 4. knowledge, 5. energy to do good deeds, 6. right mindfulness, 7. wisdom and conscientiousness)

yeik = 4 (four *Brahmavihāras* – loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity)

kho = 2 (moral shame (no.1) and moral fear/dread (no.2) of unskillful and improper behavior)

If one follows these sets of values, one's life will be long. The translation with respect to the deciphering could may like this: "Because (one) wants to make long (their) 'oh little life', (they follow) the five (precepts), seven (characteristics of a good person), four Divine Abodes, shame of doing evil, and dread of bad action.⁴

Here is the mnemotechnic device for astrologers, which helps them to remember the exact time of sun-rise throughout the lunar year:

"သောင်းနေထွက်၊ ဖက်မေနှင်း၊ မင်းလှထွေ၊ မေထပ်ထပ်၊ မတ်လည်တို၊ ပျိုပျိုထွေး၊ သွေးထွက်ထွက်၊ သက်အောင်နေ၊ သေချန်ထား၊ သားစုတ်တံ၊ ဟန်ချောထူ၊ သူအတင်း၊ နေထွက်လင်းသည်၊ မြန်တွင်းပြည်သူ မှတ်စေသော်။"

"Ten thousand suns rise; the snow of hugging mom; the beautiful king is worried; mother more (and) more; the neck of (your) husband's younger brother is short; (a little) virgin, the youngest; blood is running out; live in order to (keep yourself) alive/breathing; put death aside; son's (painting) brush; of smooth/beautiful appearance (is) erect; (that all is) his gossip; and (thus) the countryman/inhabitant in Myanmar, may (you) remember the light of sun-rise."

Lunar month no.	Month Name	Burmese mnemotechnic device	Translation of the mnem. dev.	Time of Sun-Rise
1	တန်ခူး (Dagu)	သောင်းနေထွက် (Thaung Ne Htwet)	Ten thousand suns rise	6:00
2	ကဆုန် (Kason)	ဖက်မေနှင်း (Phet Mei Hnin)	The snow of hugging mom	5:50
3	နယုန် (Nayon)	မင်းလှထွေ (Minn Hlar Htwe)	The beautiful king is worried	5:40
4	ဝါဆို (Wazo)	မေထပ်ထပ် (Mei Htut Htut)	Mother more and more	5:30
6	ဝါခေါင် (Wagaung)	မတ်လည်တို (Mat Lay Toe)	The neck of (your) husband's younger brother is short	5:40
7	တော်သလင်း (Tawthalin)	ပျိုပျိုထွေး (Pyoe Pyoe Htway)	(a little) virgin, the youngest	5:50
8	သီတင်းကျွတ် (Thadingyut)	သွေးထွက်ထွက် (Thway Htwet Htwet)	Blood is running out	6:00
9	တန်ဆောင်မုန်း (Dazaungmon)	သက်အောင်နေ (Thet Aung Nei)	Live in order to -(keep yourself) alive/breathing	6:10
10	နတ်တော် (Nataw)	သေချန်ထား (Thei Chan Htar)	Put death aside	6:20
11	ပြာသို (Pyatho)	သားစုတ်တံ (Thar Sout Tan)	Son's (painting) brush	6:30
12	တပို့တွဲ (Dabodwe)	ဟန်ချောထူ (Han Chaw Htoo)	Of smooth/beautiful appearance (is) erect	6:20
13	တပေါင်း (Dabaung)	သူအတင်း (Thoo Atinn)	(That all is) his gossip	6:10

⁴ Notice that the moral shame and dread is there two times – one in the seven qualities of a good person, and again explicitly at the end.

Note that only the first two syllables of each "word" are deciphered, the last syllable serves only poetic purposes.

The dawn is then counted as 48 minutes earlier than the sun-rise.

A more famous code is:

"မင်းဖြူ မှန်မှန်ပြော"
"Min|pshu| Hman| Hman| Pyo|"

This, translated directly, means "tell (the information) to the white king correctly". If that doesn't make any sense, then let's decipher it –

min = 5 (50 000 viss)

hman = 5 (50 viss)

pshu = 5 (5000 viss)

pyaw = 5 (5 viss)

hman = 5 (500 viss)

Altogether the weight of Mingun Bell amounts to 55 555 viss (= 90 tons). Mingun Bell is the second largest bell in the world.



Mandalay Hill (courtesy of David Novotný)



Mandalay Hill (ascended, courtesy of Ma Hsu Yee Mon)



Mandalay Hill (ascended, courtesy of Daw Sundari)



Mandalay Hill (elevator, courtesy of David Novotný)



Mingun Bell (the code and the number inscribed)



Mingun Bell (memorial stone, a plaque)



Mingun Bell (enshined in this memorial building, with a nice fence around)

3. Forget like an Iguana

There is a Burmese proverb "phut-mei padat-mei" (ဖုတ်မေ့ပုတ်မေ့), which means that one is forgetful. This proverb is related to the nature of lizards – esp. iguana – which are abundant in North Myanmar (hence I suppose that this proverb originated there). The explanation goes that when lizards, such as iguana, are chased by people to kill, the iguana runs off for a while, and then suddenly stops. Why did it stop? The Burmese people interpret this as that the iguana simply forgot to run (!) . They also believe, that perhaps their *kamma* (i.e. their previous actions) led to this kind of life-condition (*jīva-kamma*).

Taking the iguana for the metaphore, people who are doing certain important work and suddenly forget what they actually wanted to do are then labeled by this innocent saying. The Burmese gladly use this saying when they talk about themselves as well.

(I am thankful for this information to ven. Candasiri and U Aung Khaing Tun.)

4. *Peyyāla* – The Repetitions in Pāli Texts

Throughout the Pāli texts there is a huge number of repetitions, possibly to remember the text easier, to memorize it well and also create a nice and neat system in it. The views regarding the importance of repetitions vary today, and I would like to present here what the later texts and Commentaries themselves say on this issue.

Repetition of Pāli texts is not supported by *Visuddhimagga*, written ca. in 5th century AC. See what *Visuddhimagga* says below:⁵

"Yathā dvīsu bhikkhūsu bahupeyyālaṃ tantim sajjhāyantesu tikkhapañño bhikkhu sakiṃ vā dvikkhattuṃ vā peyyālamukhaṃ vitthāretvā tato paraṃ ubhatokoṭivaseneva sajjhāyaṃ karonto gacchati. Tatra nātittikkhapañño evaṃ vattā hoti "kiṃ sajjhāyo nāmesa oṭṭhapariyāhatamattaṃ kātuṃ na deti, evaṃ sajjhāye kariyamāne kadā tanti paguṇā bhavissati"ti. So āgatāgataṃ peyyālamukhaṃ vitthāretvā vā sajjhāyaṃ karoti. Tameva itaro evamāha – "kiṃ sajjhāyo nāmesa pariyosānaṃ gantuṃ na deti, evaṃ sajjhāye kariyamāne kadā tanti pariyosānaṃ gamissati"ti. Evameva tikkhapaññaṃ kesādivasena vitthārato dhātupariggaho papañcato upaṭṭhāti. Yaṃ thaddhalakkhaṇaṃ, ayaṃ pathavīdhātūtiādinā nāyena sarikhepato manasikaroto kammaṭṭhānaṃ pākāṭaṃ hoti. Itarassa tathā manasikaroto andhakāraṃ avibhūtaṃ hoti. Kesādivasena vitthārato manasikarontassa pākāṭaṃ hoti."

Path of Purification by ven. Ñāṇamoli (p.348, PDF p.406) translates it this way:

"Suppose two bhikkhus are reciting a text with many elided repetitions, then the bhikkhu with the quicker understanding fills out the elided repetitions once or twice, after which he goes on doing the recital with only the two end parts of the elisions. Here the one of less quick understanding says, "What is he reciting? Why, he does not even give one time to move one's lips! If the recitation is done like this, when shall we ever get familiar with the text?" and so he does his recitation filling out each elision as it comes. Then the other says, "What is he reciting? Why, he never lets one get to the end of it! If the recitation is done like this; when shall we ever get to the end of it?"

From this information we can see that repetition (*peyyāla*) is neither particularly appreciated nor practiced in the later Buddhist culture. Note however that in the book *Milindapañhā* ven. Nāgasena, although still just a novice, recited whole Abhidhamma Piṭaka to an assembly of Arahants including all of the repetitions - see Milinda's Questions I by PTS, p.18, PDF p.38 –

"Then the venerable Nāgasena approached those hundred myriad arahants; and when he had approached them he spoke thus to them: "I, revered sirs, thinking of skilled mental states, unskilled mental states, indeterminate mental states, and having arranged them in these three parts, will propound the whole of the Abhidhamma-piṭaka in detail." "It is good, Nāgasena, propound it." Then for seven months the venerable Nāgasena propounded the seven compositions in detail. The earth roared, the devatās applauded, the Brahmās clapped their hands, and deva-like perfumes and powders and deva-like flowers of the *maṇḍārava* rained down."

From this particular example we can however see that there were certain exceptions, e.g. for the text of *Abhidhamma* ☺ .

May all beings be happy and healthy,
monk Sarana ☺

⁵ I have not found this paragraph in any Pāli Commentary (*Aṭṭhakathā*) or even Sub-Commentary (*Ṭīkā*) at all.